

Homeless Ministry Fights Back After Government Allegedly 'Cripples' Its Work

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A ministry in Tennessee is fighting back after a city reportedly issued a cease-and-desist letter precluding the organization from operating.

The Father's House, a homeless ministry of Living Water Full Gospel Church in Westmoreland, Tennessee, informed officials with the city of Westmoreland in a letter issued through attorneys that they believe the government is purportedly violating both state and federal laws by precluding the ministry from living out its mission and providing housing.

Ryan Gardner, an attorney with First Liberty, a religious liberty law firm representing the ministry alongside Anderson & Reynolds PLC, told CBN's Faithwire The Father's House ministry is run by a husband and wife who are former drug addicts and who "escaped that drug addiction and now they feel called to ... minister to other men who are seeking to escape the trappings of drug addiction."

Gardner said the couple, whose facility is part of Living Water Full Gospel Church, reached out to the city last year about permits and were reportedly told nothing further was needed.

"[They] went on to get approval from the Tennessee Department of Corrections to be transitional housing for the very type of men that they're targeting to help," he said. "And after all of this happened, the city suddenly changed its tune and said that they needed to install sprinklers and a firewall in the facility at a cost [of] about \$85,000, which would just be

crippling to them.”

Gardner said the city has expressed worries over fire safety inside the building, though he believes officials are “misapplying [their] own code,” and he pondered whether there might be religious hostility toward the ministry or the “types of people that they’re trying to house.”

The attorney said a cease-and-desist letter was sent from Westmoreland to the ministry on Aug. 11, 2022, ordering the group to halt operations until these government requirements are met.

As a result, The Father’s House, at the moment, cannot live out its mission, with attorneys demanding the Westmoreland cease and desist letter be rescinded by Jan. 30.

“It has crippled their ministry, where they’re not able to operate it,” Gardner said. “They’re not able to help people who are on the streets right now and who are in desperate need of help and have nowhere else to go.”

The attorney said First Liberty hopes to see Westmoreland officials reverse course and work with the ministry to ensure it can help and house people in desperate need.

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